

# PAPILIO ATALANTA.



## CHARACTER GENERICUS.

*Antennæ* apicem versus crassiores, sæpius clavato-capitatae.

*Alæ* (sedentis) erectæ sursumque conniventes (volatu diurno.)

*Lin. Syst. Nat.* p. 744.

## CHARACTER SPECIFICUS, &c.

PAPILIO alis dentatis nigris albo maculatis: fascia communi purpurea: primoribus utrinque, posterioribus marginali.

*Lin. Syst. Nat.* p. 779.

*Nymphales pbalerati.*

PAPILIO tetrapus; alis denticulatis nigris albo-maculatis: omnibus fascia arcuata coccinea.

*Lin. Faun. Suec.* 1. n. 777.

*Mouff.* p. 100. f. 3. 4.

*Mer: europ.* 2. p. 41. t. 91.

*Roes. inf.* 1. t. 6.

*Degeer. inf.* 1. t. 22. f. 5.

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In formosissimis, quotquot generat Britannia, infectis habendus Papilio Atalanta ex cruce oritur, quæ

quæ plerumque urticæ vulgaris, cui infidere solet, folia depascitur. In pupam seu chrysalidem mense Julio et Augusto ut plurimum convertitur, e qua diebus sedecim seu octodecim erumpit papilio.

Pleraque insecta lepidoptera simul atque e chrysalide liberantur, vel cum primæ se fugæ commiserint, guttas aliquot liquoris cujusdam colorati, ut plurimum magis minusve rubri, solent emittere. Hoc in pluribus speciebus communibus sæpissime cernitur, in papilione scilicet urticæ, Atalanta, Polychloro, reliquisque; et ut taceam simile quiddam velle naturam in cæteris animalibus recens natis, dignum est ut præcipue notetur, cum optime explicet phænomenon non modo antiquis temporibus sed et recentioribus prodigii loco habitum; guttarum nempe sanguinearum ab aere descensum, quem memorant varii scriptores, Ovidius præcipue inter portenta quæ, trucidato Cæsare, Romanorum animos turbarunt.

“ Sæpe faces vivæ mediis ardere sub astris :

“ Sæpe inter nimbos guttæ cecidere cruentæ.”

Rem miram, quæ diu crux erat philosophorum, verisimiliter explicasse primus videtur celeberrimus Peirescius, qui in Gallia anno millesimo sexcentesimo octavo suis oculis phænomeni vestigia examinavit, sibi que persuasissimum habuit provenisse guttulas rubras e papilionis specie, papilione fortasse urticæ id temporis præter solitum abundante, præcipue prope loca ubi nimbus cruentatus ceciderat. In hanc sententiam ivit Swammerdamus, qui tamen non *αυτοπτης* fuisse videtur. Eo me magis de hac  
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re recte intelligenda sollicitum sentio, quod noverim auctorem, cujus nomen me jam effugit, non modo de causa hujusmodi imbris sed et de ipso imbre omnino dubitasse. Satis tamen probavit Peirescius oculatus testis revera devenisse a papilionibus circumvolitantibus humorem prædictum quasi sanguine rubentem; cumque de eo sententiam firmaverit accuratissimi Swammerdami judicium, vix possit dubitari quin peritissimo rum horum hominum sagacitas rem difficillimam acu tetigerit.

# A T A L A N T A.



## GENERIC CHARACTER.

*Antennæ* or Horns thickening towards the upper part, and generally terminating in a knob, or club-shaped tip.

*Wings* (when sitting) erect, and meeting upwards.  
(*Flight* diurnal.)

## SPECIFIC CHARACTER, &c.

BLACK BUTTERFLY spotted with white :  
the upper wings marked by a transverse, the  
lower by a marginal band of crimson.

THE ADMIRABLE BUTTERFLY.

*Harris. Aur. t. 6. f. a—h.*

THE ADMIRAL BUTTERFLY.

*Albin. t. 3.*

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The *Papilio Atalanta* is one of the most beautiful of the British insects, and proceeds from a caterpillar which feeds on the leaves of the common nettle. It generally changes to a chrysalis in the month of July or August; from which, in about the





the space of sixteen or eighteen days, emerges the complete insect.

The papilionaceous insects in general, soon after their enlargement from the chrysalis, and commonly during the first flight they take, discharge some drops of a coloured fluid, which in many species is of a red, more or less intense. This may be frequently observed in some of the most common species, as the *P. urticæ*, *Atalanta*, *Polychloros*, &c. and is a circumstance which, exclusive of its analogy to the same process of nature in other animals, is peculiarly worthy of attention from the explanation which it affords of a phenomenon sometimes considered both in ancient and modern times in the light of a prodigy, viz. the descent of red drops from the air, which has been called a shower of blood: an event recorded by several writers, and particularly commemorated by Ovid amongst the prodigies which took place after the death of the great dictator.

“ Sæpe faces visæ mediis ardere sub astris :

“ Sæpe inter nimbos guttæ cecidere cruentæ.”

With threat'ning signs the low'ring skies were fill'd,  
And sanguine drops from murky clouds distill'd.

This highly rational elucidation of a phenomenon, at first view so inexplicable, seems to have been first proposed by the celebrated Peiresc, who with his own eyes observed the vestiges of an appearance of this kind in France in the year 1608, and was clearly convinced of its real origin, viz.  
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the discharge above mentioned, proceeding from a species of butterfly, probably the *P. urticæ*, which happened during that season to be uncommonly plentiful in the particular district where the phenomenon was observed. The same idea was also entertained by Swammerdam, though he does not appear to have verified it from his own observations.

I am the more particular on this subject, as I have seen in some author, whose name I do not at present recollect, this solution, and even the appearance itself, regarded as in the highest degree improbable: but the ocular attestation of so eminent a character as Peirefc, and the full persuasion of a reasoner like Swammerdam, are surely sufficient to establish not only the credibility, but the certainty, both of the phenomenon itself and its explanation.